

What is chewing gum made of?

From the sweeties.net wiki

Modern chewing gum is made of gum base, sweeteners, softeners, flavourings and colours, and many gums also have a hard or powdered coating. Here is what each one does.

1. Gum base: the chewy part

Gum base is what you are left with once the flavour has gone. It does not dissolve in saliva and it is not digested, which is why gum lasts so long in the mouth. It makes up about 20 to 25% of ordinary gum, 25 to 30% of sugar free gum and 15 to 20% of bubble gum.

The exact recipe is a trade secret, known to only a few people at each gum company. Large gum makers usually make their own gum base, while small ones buy it in. It is built from several kinds of ingredient:

- **Elastomers**, which give the stretch and bounce. These can be natural latex, such as chicle, or synthetic rubbers such as styrene butadiene rubber, butyl rubber and polyisobutylene.
- **Resins**, which give the gum body and strength, such as glycerol esters of gum, terpene resins and polyvinyl acetate.
- **Waxes**, which soften it, usually paraffin or microcrystalline wax.
- **Fats**, often from hydrogenated vegetable oils, which also soften it.
- **Emulsifiers**, such as lecithin, which help everything mix.
- **Fillers**, such as calcium carbonate or talc, which give texture.
- **Antioxidants**, most often BHT, to stop it going stale.

Bubble gum uses a different base, with longer polymers that stretch further so you can blow bigger bubbles.

2. Sweeteners

Ordinary gum is sweetened with sugar. Sugar free gum uses sugar alcohols such as sorbitol, maltitol and xylitol, often with intense sweeteners such as aspartame or acesulfame K. The bulk sweeteners dissolve first, in the first few minutes of chewing: see [why gum loses its flavour](#).

3. Softeners

Softeners such as glycerine and corn syrup keep gum soft and flexible, so it does not snap or crumble when you first bite it.

4. Flavours and colours

Mint, fruit, cinnamon and bubblegum flavours, and the colours that go with them. Some gums seal their flavours in tiny capsules so the taste lasts longer.

5. The coating

Pellet gums, the pillow shaped pieces sold in blister packs and bottles, are coated in a hard shell of sweetener, built up layer by layer in a turning pan. Stick and slab gums are usually dusted with a powdered sweetener so they do not stick together.

Where did gum base come from?

Gum was once made from chicle, a latex tapped from Central American trees in the same zigzag way rubber is tapped. By the 1960s most gum makers had switched to cheaper synthetic bases. Only a handful of small gum companies still use chicle today. See [is chewing gum made of plastic?](#) for what that change means, and [how chewing gum is made](#) for how it all comes together.

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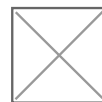
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